

California and the West



BOB CAREY / Los Angeles Times

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library will open in November, but historians say it probably won't be an especially valuable research center until at least the late '90s.

By KENNETH R. WEISS
TIMES STAFF WRITER

When the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library opens near Simi Valley in November, not one sheet of its 54 million pages of White House documents will be available for public scrutiny.

By law, archivists have until 1994 before they must consider requests to see any of the library's storehouse of presidential records—the largest collection of White House documents ever assembled.

In addition, Reagan has placed a 12-year legal restriction on several categories of White House records, including those detailing confidential advice he received during his presidency. Documents about foreign affairs or national security, including undisclosed details about the Iran-Contra affair, may remain shielded from public view for a generation or more under an executive order signed by Reagan when he was in office.

Restrictions are not new to presidential records. Shortly before the opening of the Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace in Yorba Linda last July, the library's director created a stir by suggesting that researchers and scholars would be screened on the basis of the content and slant of their work. He later backed down.

Nothing to Read at Reagan Library

No White House Documents Will Be Available to the Public When It Opens in November

Reagan's presidential papers, however, are the first to be made public property under a 1978 law that evolved out of a bitter clash between Nixon and Congress over control of his White House records. The rules allow so many restrictions on the release of documents that some historians criticize the law as more concerned about presidential privacy than public interest.

"The hope is that it [the papers] will take so long to come out, that nobody would care anymore," said Warren I. Cohen, a history professor at Michigan State University and a leading critic of restrictions on official records. "The really important papers are not going to

be available for quite a long time."

While Reagan's papers will be restricted in the initial years, library visitors will have access to exhibits in a museum being installed in the building at the direction of Reagan and a close circle of friends and advisers.

"The exhibit will be a visual biography of President Reagan's life," said Bill Garber, Reagan's spokesman. "It will include all of the important events of his life and presidency."

But historians often dismiss presidential museums as a glorification of their namesakes with little research value. They suggest that the Reagan Library will not blossom into a center for histori-

cal research until well-guarded papers begin to emerge sometime after the turn of the century.

"Being realistic, this isn't going to be a boon to historians until the late 1990s or beyond," said Roger Dingman, a history professor at USC who has done extensive research at presidential libraries.

Situated in the hills above Simi Valley, the Reagan Library will be the largest—153,000 square feet—and the most expensive—\$60 million—of the nation's 11 presidential libraries. All initial costs will be covered by private donations, including the \$2 million collected at Reagan's 80th birthday dinner last week.

As with most presidential libraries, Reagan plans to hand over control of his to the National Archives and Records Administration, which will manage both the library and museum.

Until the Watergate era, departing presidents claimed ownership of their White House records. The gentlemanly tradition allowed former presidents to protect their secrets and avoid embarrassment.

As a result, it took many years for some papers to fall into historians' hands. Abraham Lincoln's papers, for example, were not opened to public research until 1949, four score and four years after his death.

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Debate Is Raging on Housing Funds

■ **Redevelopment:** Some cities are using money meant to construct low- and moderate-income homes for other projects. Legislators accuse them of ducking their responsibilities.

By DAVE LESHER
TIMES STAFF WRITER

Three years into a massive redevelopment project, city officials in the affluent community of Poway in north San Diego County found themselves with nearly \$2 million generated by the project for low- and moderate-income housing.

But instead of using the money for homes, city officials decided in 1987 to spend some on new curbs, street lights and a sound wall "because these improvements could be shown to directly benefit low- and moderate-income households in the area."

Legal Aid attorney Catherine A. Rodman was incredulous. She filed suit last summer to challenge the construction, contending that the city stretched the law that governs the money's use "beyond anything it was ever meant to accomplish."

"Are my homeless clients supposed to thank the city for giving them a nice curb to sleep on?" she asked.

The two points of view are the heart of a debate in California over the use of hundreds of millions of dollars that have been generated by redevelopment to build low-

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and moderate-income housing.

On one side, an impatient state Legislature contends that some cities are trying to duck their responsibility to build new homes for those who cannot afford California's inflated real estate. Through local redevelopment agencies, cities now control the state's largest source of money for low-cost housing.

On the other side are cities, some financially strapped, that fear low-income housing will attract transients, strain services and worsen crime. Even when they have the money to build housing, many cities are finding other ways to spend the money or are simply leaving it untouched in growing bank accounts.

"There is a reluctance and an outright arrogance on the part of some agencies—and we will not tolerate that," said Assemblyman Richard Polanco (D-Los Angeles), who sponsored a 1988 law that requires redevelopment agencies to spend their housing money within five years. "It's a serious problem and it's going to get more serious with the loss of jobs in two-income households that can no longer pay the mortgage."

While acknowledging that the state faces serious housing problems, Ken Parrington, director of Downey's redevelopment agency, countered that local governments have many competing needs and some of the state's housing goals are unattainable. "The counties are going broke, the school districts are belly up and the cities are next on the list," he said.

Regional planners estimate that in Southern California alone as much as \$180 million made available for low-cost housing through redevelopment remains unspent. The planners at the Southern California Assn. of Governments say this money could be leveraged to produce about \$500-million worth of homes for the poor—more than 6,000 new houses and apartments.

This comes at a time when the planning agency has identified a shortage of about 1 million affordable homes in Southern California. That is expected to increase by another 250,000 homes over the next five years, said Joe Carreras, a SCAG senior planner.

The debate over housing funds revolves around a 1977 state law that requires redevelopment agencies to set aside 20% of

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San Diego School to Test 'Preventive Government'

■ **Education:** Gov. Pete Wilson believes that poor children and their families will benefit if social services are offered along with reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic.

By WILLIAM TROMBLEY
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SAN DIEGO—A severely overcrowded elementary school in the low-income City Heights neighborhood here soon will become a testing ground for Gov. Pete Wilson's belief that both poor children and their families will benefit if a variety of social services are made available to them at school.

In March, after two years of planning, city, county and school officials expect to transform the Alexander Hamilton Elementary School into a new kind of combined school and social service agency. Along with traditional schooling for children, their families will be able to get most of what they need at the school: health care, job training, welfare payments, English-as-a-second-language classes, public



MARC YVES REZIS / Los Angeles Times

Carrie Peery, principal of Hamilton Elementary School in San Diego, with pupils. In March, the school will become a testing ground for education and social services.

housing referrals and much more.

If the San Diego experiment is successful, the Wilson Administration would like to see similar programs started statewide. It has set aside \$20 million in its proposed 1991-92 budget for this purpose.

At Hamilton, 88% of the pupils are from racial minorities, about half of the 1,350 pupils have limited proficiency in English and almost one-third attend the kindergarten-through-fifth-grade school for fewer than 60 days before moving to a new

neighborhood and a new school.

Scores are low. Last year, California Assessment Program scores for Hamilton third-graders were well below the San Diego County average in reading, writing and math.

Advocates of the combined schools-social services concept say this approach will create a better learning climate for poor children and eventually scores will climb.

The San Diego approach, called "New Beginnings," is in line with the "preventive government" message Wilson has been preaching.

The new governor first talked about the school concept during his campaign against Democrat Dianne Feinstein. The proposal not only enabled him to blunt Feinstein's image as an education advocate, but helped Wilson strengthen ties to the state's education Establishment, often at odds with his predecessor, Republican George Deukmejian.

Although the governor's proposed 1991-92 budget trims overall education spending by \$2 billion, Wilson has set aside \$100 million for new child development and education programs, including the \$20 million to encourage other cities and school districts to follow San Diego's

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TV INTERVIEW SHOWS

Guests scheduled for today's television interview shows:

NEWSMAKER SUNDAY
CNN, 7:30 a.m.

■ Author Daniel Yergin;
Hisham Nazer, Saudi
minister of petroleum

MEET THE PRESS

NBC, 8:30 a.m., Channel 4
■ Sen. George J. Mitchell
(D-Me.); Sen. Bob Dole
(R-Kan.)

THIS WEEK WITH

DAVID BRINKLEY
ABC, 10 a.m., Channel 7
■ King Hussein of Jordan;
Sen. Richard Lugar
(R-Ind.); Rep. Lee H.
Hamilton (D-Ind.)

FACE THE NATION

CBS, 12:30 a.m., Channel 2
■ Secretary of State James
A. Baker III

CAPITOL JOURNAL

Wilson Relishes Added Role in Party Politics

By GEORGE SKELTON
TIMES SACRAMENTO BUREAU CHIEF

SACRAMENTO—Shortly after he was elected governor, Pete Wilson collared an assemblyman in a hotel room and implored him to run for the state Senate as the GOP's best hope for preserving a vacant Republican seat.

"I had decided I probably wouldn't run, but the governor's urging made the difference. If he hadn't encouraged me the way he did, I wouldn't have run," said Assemblyman Tim Leslie (R-Carmichael), now the front-runner in a March 19 special election.

About the same time Wilson was lobbying Leslie, he also recruited a loyal political supporter, Long Beach businessman Ron Cedillo, to run for the No. 2 post in the

state party, an automatic steppingstone to the chairmanship. Faced with unanticipated conservative opposition, the governor recently reversed directions and advised Cedillo to bow out of the contest in favor of a former chairman, Tirso del Junco, a Los Angeles physician.

But Wilson's forceful moves in both the legislative and party races illustrate a significant contrast between the new governor and his fellow Republican predecessor, George Deukmejian: an eagerness to play a strong role in politics. He means to do it at all levels, from local to national.

"This is a political office. You're going to see a different style," said Wilson's veteran chief of staff, Bob White. "A governor can't ignore the politics of the job, in a job that requires political skill."

Wilson has set up a political operation in

the governor's office and although it is not nearly as extensive as the President's elaborate political apparatus in the White House, he clearly has the Washington model in mind.

"Deukmejian was noted for his caution and playing defense," said one Wilson strategist who did not want to be identified. "We like to play offense. You can't score without the ball."

Heading up the governor's in-house political operation will be an unrelated namesake, Marty Wilson, 38, a trusted campaign aide who specializes in the nuts and bolts of politics. When Marty Wilson speaks of "infrastructure," he is not talking about bridges and aqueducts, but of computer lists of swing voters and small contributors. "We [the Wilson

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Assemblyman Tim Leslie

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